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THE MASTER KNOT

Henry H. Chamberlin

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THE MASTER KNOT

THE MASTER KNOT

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HENRY HARMON CHAMBERLIN

Author of "The Age of Ivory,"—"Anacreon and Omar Khayyam."

THE CORNHILL PUBLISHING COMPANY
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FOREWORD

These poems reflect a multitude of moods. Some of the ideas may seem contradictory. I would ask the reader to consider that a larger harmony may often contain many apparent discords. The Universe, as conceived by the human mind, abounds in contradictions. Moreover the emotions, which it is the chief aim of the poet to express, come from vital instincts whose mystery no one has ever solved. The expression of such emotions can never be consistent.

In "Echoes from the Norse" and "Translations from the Icelandic," I have adopted the alliterative verse of the early Saxons and Scandinavians. Such songs were sung, to the accompaniment of the harp, in the halls of ancient earls and kings. The "Echoes from the Norse" and "Translations from the Icelandic" are written in that primitive Teutonic metre whose longest surviving example is the old English poem of Beowulf. "The Lay of the Two Swords" and the "Translations" are couched in a later and more rigid metre which was practised by the scalds of Iceland and Norway.

Four poems — the "Ballade of Greeting," the "Champagne Song," "The Price" and the "Supplication in Time of War" — have already been published in the "Rosemary Press." My thanks are due to Mr. Robert H. Burrage and his honored father, Mr. Charles Dana Burrage, for permission to reproduce them here.

HENRY HARMON CHAMBERLIN

Worcester, Massachusetts,
December seventh, 1923

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THE MASTER KNOT

And many a knot unravelled by the road,
But not the Master Knot of human fate.—OMAR KHAYYAM.

THE MASTER KNOT

I

In silent skies, when stars are shining bright,
Behold the glittering galaxy of Night,
The far flung splendour of the Milky Way,
All interfused with beams of broken light.

The stars in ceaseless concourse seem to roll,
Revolving east to west, with never a goal,
Around about the pallid, azure gleam
Of one fixed lamp, that broods above our pole.

We call the stars inconstant, judging ill.
They only seem to move with fickle will,
Shifting forever round one constant star,
Because our fretful Earth is never still.

'Tis we who whirl, under the phantom ray
Of our dead moon, lit by the orb of day;
Scorned by the brighter beams of myriad suns,
That seem so small, that shine so far away.

II

Men once held faith, the Heavens o'er-arched the Earth,
Where souls reaped heavenly harvest or Hell's dearth,
According to the laws of God above,
Made for each human creature at his birth.

With riper knowledge of these latter years,
No Heaven nor Hell in that great void appears;
No stars rain influence down on human birth;
No angels harp amid the crystal spheres.

Could we on Æther's pinions once be flown,
We'd find great suns, ten thousands times our own,
Circled by giant worlds innumerable,
Where each fulfills his destiny alone.

Amid this whirl of planets, great and small,
Slow circling, each to each reciprocal,
Can we believe the fable of the Christ,
That shows this world the cynosure of all ?

III

Think ye that all this boundless Universe
Was blighted once on Earth by Adam's curse?
That here, the foolish frailty of Mankind,
On any other star could make life worse?

In that illimitable sea of life,
What is poor Man, his fond ephemeral strife?
His dream that, being born, he cannot die?
His hope and faith, with superstition rife?

Aye, what is Man, that he should fondly dream
His soul exalt, beyond the feeblest beam
Of the bright sun, whence he must draw his life
With other brutes, that roam by field or stream?

IV

When on the cross was nailed the Son of Man
To save Creation from His Father's ban,
What, think ye, happened in the far off worlds,
Circling Arcturus or Aldebaran?

Beyond the fabled reach of Jacob's stair,
Beyond the reach of Man, his purblind prayer,
Mid blazing concourse of unnumbered suns,
In countless million worlds, what happened there?

'Twere miracle indeed if this might be,
Each world with its own Saviour, like to Thee,
At the same moment, writhing on the cross,
And Thou for all, O Man of Galilee!

V

Vain thought! the distant worlds that rolled unseen
By Thee and by Thy forbears, Nazarene,
Unnoticed by the prophets of Thy tribe,
How should they know of Thee, what Thou hast been?

THE MASTER KNOT

Unnumbered worlds that coruscate afar,
Haply by hundreds, round their larger star,
Thine hallowed words, Thou noblest of our Earth,
How should these know of them and what they are?

Before this Earth was 'ware of Thine and Thee,
Before the great fish-lizard swam our sea,
How many million worlds had rolled their way
And passed from Time unto Eternity?

When Easter lilies nevermore shall bloom,
When like the moon, our Earth is but a tomb,
When Thou and all Thy precepts are forgot,
How many more shall rise from Time's dark womb?

And those are dead; and these are yet unborn.
Some, wrapped in gathering darkness, roll forlorn,
When o'er the drying stretch of some strange sea,
Their pale sun rises on their final morn.

And some have yet to learn of springtime showers
And tropic bloom of bright, unheard of flowers;
And sentient creatures, destined to be born,
God grant, to greater happiness than ours.

VI

Haply a soul of our ephemeral race,
Endowed by Death with supernatural grace,
To journey through the round of all these worlds,
Would nevermore behold a human face.

But many a face and many a form he'd find
More strange than wildest dreams of humankind;
Out-marvelling an old Arabian tale,
Where even Homer's genius were struck blind.

In those far worlds, each separate denizen
Must live and move beyond frail human ken,
In wisdom, each according to his kind,
And some are more and some are less than men.

Some may be vile as blindworm or the mole;
And some may reach beyond the highest goal
Of all we know for noble or for good,
In aspiration of a human soul.

VII

With blessed creatures, many a planet teems,
Warmed by their Sun, the foison of his beams,
Between the mystic doors of Death and Birth,
Whose deeds are nobler than our fondest dreams.

Like us, they needs must fight to win Life's prize;
And if each conquers not, he surely dies;
But, haply free from pettiness of soul,
They brave Fate's worst in nobler, grander wise.

Ah, not like us, with hopeless passion tost,
And every chance desire with folly crost;
Where ape-like Malice wrings the red heart's core;
And strength is self-consumed, and virtue lost.

Hope is their crown, with joy made manifest;
Where no false yearning dwells in any breast;
But soul with blameless soul in love abides,
Till Death shall welcome to a final rest.

But no supernal being quickeneth,
In any farthest planet to draw breath;
Even as we, they suffer the blind laws
Of toil and tribulations, pain and death.

For them and us forever, Truth is sealed;
Known only as the violets of the field
May glimpse the sun, or dreaming men glimpse dawn,
Eternal mystery in love revealed.

PAN, AN ECLOGUE

PAN, AN ECLOGUE

O summer hours! O joys without an end,
When the sweet showers a brighter bloom portend!
Laugh loud, ye parting pleasures of the prime;
For all the world's attuned to Love's own rhyme!
O then ye city denizens, fenced in
With proper conduct and original sin,
Swarm in the reeking squares like mites in cheese
To drink near beer and do indecencies.
Dolorous on the night and on the morn,
Even in your grosser merriment forlorn,
Your thwarted lives must all indecent be;
Since Love's own power ye call indecency!

I o'er the rippled waters in canoe,
Moved underneath the noonday's cloudless blue
Unto an island shore; and thereupon,
Screened from the parchéd fervor of the sun,
Where the bronze beech leaves take their coat of tan,

Couched on the curléd ferns the great God Pan.
The frog from either hoof was worn away;
The goat's hair on his legs was silver gray;
But otherwise, like laurel or wild sage,
He had the savor of a green old age.

" All hail! " I cried, " and worship unto Thee
O Pan alive, tho' fallen thy deity!
'Twas told in olden books how Pan was dead."

Quoth he: " I am powerfully alive instead;
Men go to church and bless the marriage ban,
But in their hearts they all adore great Pan,
Though furtively, not naming of my name,
With contrite morrows and concealéd shame.
The great, glad freedom long hath gone before;
Outwardly other idols they adore."

" And one of them," I cried all overbold,
" Is Mammon, father of lies and lord of gold! "

Said Pan: " Your talk is really so much gammon;
There's no one hereabouts who cares for Mammon.
It might occur even to a mortal brain
Men rarely worship what they can't attain.

In Alton, every year the crop of pears
Will far exceed the crop of millionaires. . . .
A millionaire and criminal to be
Requires unusual sagacity;
To Mammon though all others may defer
There is not here one single worshipper."

" What are these idols, then, to whom bow down
The well-to-do that dwell within this town? "

Said Pan: " Above all other deities
Whom in their temples Alton glorifies,
The twain whereto all hearts be most propense
Are Mediocrity and Insolence.
For the dull devil, Mediocrity,
Is their tin god, Respectability;
And Insolence, whom all the heavens reject,
The brass sealed god they call their self respect!
The Gog and Magog whom they all adore
With song of nasal praise forevermore. . . .
The all sufficient dullness of the fool,
The hard horse sense inherent in the mule,
Whom Ignorance enwraps as in a pall,
Who therefore deem that they are all in all,

To them loud praise from every lyre doth swell!
But me, far off, within a forest dell,
At the hour from high noon most far away,
The inevitable worship all must pay
That ere Time was through boundless Night was sung,
Like to the budding Morn forever young.
Me on thick moss, where wanton creepers twine
Over the fragrant needles of the pine,
The lover and beloved their worship pay,
Who hide their heads upon the dawn of day,
And rising at the morn when sweet birds sing
Spurn at their love even as a shameful thing!
The more they burn, the less their souls approve
Who find indelicate the guerdon of Love!
And as the baser metal unrefined
Heated white hot but proves its baser kind,
Roused unto nobler action they debased,
Follow their natures and become disgraced.
So in their sordid lives it is full sure
To the impure is everything impure;
And all the livelier their lives may be,
All the more plain their foul impurity.
O, town dwellers, who walk about your town

And seek to cry all opposition down;
Ye go to church and satiate your greed
And deem ye know the universal need
While overhead, beyond the realms of Day
Flows into space unknown the Milky Way!
Ye grossly eat and drink and brew and bake
And all your little lives are a mistake,
Full fain to lie even about your lives
Unto your pious pastors and your wives! "

Said I: " 'Twas told me once that thou wert sage.
Is this thy bitterness in thine old age?
Why gird at men and women who to thee
Whether they will or no, do fealty?
Pity were still their portion on their path.
Alas they are unworthy of thy wrath,
Who seek in vain to stifle and to hide
The ardours of their being that abide!
Like as a new born kitten mewls and cries,
Blinking the sun because it hath sore eyes,
So they behold the glories of thy world,
The passion of the Universe unfurled.
Were they more happy did they pay the price

Of knowing, it was only cowardice
Which they call purity? They are but men."

Said Pan, " They were more worthy of my ken.
If gladly in their daring to be true
They did not flinch at what they fain would do.
There's naught more sacred in the round of earth
Than the love-joy in heralding a birth. . . .
The consecration of the baser strife
When beauty kindles at the spark of life.
But ye who fain would clothe your coward shame
In the poor virtue of a pompous name,
Know this who know it to your bane and ruth.
I do abhor the thing that is not truth.
And ye whose little lives are all a lie
Ye have my curse upon you and must die
Though sallow at the cheek and foul to see
Ye die in odour of your sanctity.
What though the mourners gather at the bier,
Your storied virtues fall on every ear
Along the streets they all bespeak you well?
It was the Lie that rang your funeral knell.
Of all the evils in the universe

PAN, AN ECLOGUE

These lies are worthiest to have my curse;
And blackest of them all, I hold the lie
That aping virtue slurs reality.
More than the man who beats his wife at night,
More than the man whom torture doth delight,
More than the man whom all his equals damn;
Beyond all these I do despise a sham.
O glad the summer and all fresh things that be,
Gladness of glorious prosperity!
Calm smiles the lake when Summer is at large,
Where Zephyr mid the pines upon the marge
Laughs unto the light shadow on the lawn;
And the far East at opalescent dawn
Laughs to the sparkling air; and the clouds make
Reflection in the waters of the lake,
Blue all above and underneath all blue,
Where to men's fondest hopes the dream comes true.
Paddles the muskrat o'er the placid pool;
Under the rocks the gleaming trout lie cool;
And all is beauty ready at men's will,
What time the day dies dim, and night comes still,

To whisper in all ears the selfsame song,
Tall nodding pines and drowsy birds among:
'O love! love! love! O come ye to the call!
Harken ye lovers! love is all in all!
Mate unto mate, 'tis Nature's dearest need!
Come to the call and cast away your creed!
Come to the call and banish all your pain!
Come to your lover and be loved again!
Love and be loved and banish all remorse!
It is my worship and a sacred force!' "

"Nay then," quoth I, "even a god shall find
His worship is not shared by womankind. . . .
Else what becomes of all society
That men upbuild to save the family? "

Quoth Pan in thoughtful wise: "It well may be
My worship will destroy society;
But when Society is overpast,
I and my worship evermore shall last.
While woman is a woman and man's a man,
The world cannot go round without great Pan,

Though all the women always bow the knee
Before my rustic shrine in secrecy. . . .
But get thee hence, give o'er this wordy play
And I will follow on declining day;
For when at eve the wildfowl 'gin to rove
I walk abroad to teach men how to love!"

LEVIA GRAVIA

THE LAW

Obey the law, but let the law be just,
Benign and merciful, for otherwise
The Lord of Freedom, thundering from the skies,
Shall hurl your tyranny to kindred dust.

Just laws were made for Man, and Freedom's cause,
And equal happiness and right secured.
For this our fathers suffered and endured;
But only slaves bow down to tyrants' laws.

THANATOS

I gaze on Death, serene and undismayed;
A youth of godlike feature, fair to see.
His sunbright brows are crowned with memory,
As though with ivy chaplet overlaid.
His eyes beam fealty that cannot fade.
He hovers o'er me, poised on soft, white wings,
Whence issue forth etherial murmurings
Of bubbling stream, green mead and flowery glade.

There is a calm upon the face of Death,
Beyond conception of our fevered strife,
The flush of Youth, the Infant's deep drawn breath,
Manhood and Age, with care and sorrow rife.
To all beholders, smilingly he saith:
" Why grieve, beloved? I bring immortal life."

THE TWIN SPIRITS

Mortal the rose
  Blooms in the spring.
Violets upclose;
  Love's on the wing.
Mortal, ah, mortal,
  Our frail desires;
Death's cold portal
  Quencheth our fires.

The blithest breeze
  Of spring doth sigh
In the leaves of the trees:
  " We all must die! "
Mortal, ah, mortal,
  All upon Earth;
Death's dark portal
  Yawns at Birth.

The violets fade
  And the roses pass
To the snow-clad shade
  Of withered grass;
You and I
  When all is done,
Soon must lie
  Cold in the sun.

But, ah, once more,
  With leaping feet
Shall Love pass o'er
  New lives to greet;
Where the bluebirds sing
  Above our tomb,
Fresh violets spring;
  Fresh roses bloom.

How the robins call
  Over field and fell!
They heed not at all
  Where the dead sleep well.

THE TWIN SPIRITS

Gone like a dream,
  Old lives forgot;
And the rushing stream
  Reveals them not.

O Death and Birth,
  Ye pass men o'er
And the joys of Earth
  Change evermore;
And time and tide
  Have spring and fall;
But Love shall abide
  And brood over all.

HYMN TO THE OCEAN

I

Mysterious Ocean, ere Earth's primal blossom,
Ere Man drew his breath, thou wert ancient of days!
Who knows of the secrets that hide in thy bosom?
And who shall inquire thy works and thy ways?

'Neath skies, clouded over with black tribulation,
My spirit leaps up, mid thy storms to adore
The terror, the tumult, the fierce exultation
That comes to my soul, mid thy waves and their roar.

HYMN TO THE OCEAN

II

I love thee in winter, when sunlight is failing,
Where floats the white gannet, o'er mariners' graves;
And the wind bears the lilt of the kittiwake's wailing,
That dips the black tips of her wings in thy waves;

Or when summer sunbeams are dancing and sparkling
In the late afternoon, while the fisher steers home;
Or when thy still waves neath clear starlight lie darkling;
And the seagulls find sleep, as they float on thy foam.

I love thee at noonday, when no thunder mutters,
But each little wavelet reflects the sun's glare;
And, in bright arabesque, like a fan as it flutters,
Above thy clear surface, the flying fish flare.

I love thee at evening, when Twilight comes stealing
O'er cloudy gray waters that gleam in the west;
Mid the lingering crimson of sunset, revealing,
O'er wistful horizons, the isles of the blest.

III

Mysterious mother of Earth's kindly races,
From out thy broad breast, all our joyance began;
Yet with famishing sharks and the poulpe's cold embraces,
Death lurks in thy depths for the horror of Man.

Man's death is thy pastime, the sport of thy surges;
Ships break at thy blows and are crushed by thy strife;
Yet every fierce billow, as onward it urges,
And all thy wild reaches are teeming with life.

Great mother of clouds and swift rivers and fountains,
The rains are thy daughters, that rise from the sea.
Thou spreadest sweet verdure on meadows and mountains;
And the oaks of the forest are nourished by thee.

Beneficent mother that heals and assuages;
Deep fount of well being, true source of fair dreams,
Life came from thy depths with the fulness of ages;
What were we without thee, who dwell by thy streams?

HYMN TO THE OCEAN

IV

Man's life upon Earth by thy skyline is bounded.
We bathe in thy tides and we sail o'er thy main;
But e'en as by children, thy depths are unsounded
By us, and thy pebbles we gather in vain.

We love beyond knowledge; we love beyond reason;
Thy storm and its terrors, we love beyond fear.
We were born 'neath thy spell. Though we bide for a season
Afar, yet thine infinite murmurs we hear;

When shines thy pale phosphor beneath the moon's crescent,
Or flash thy blue waves 'neath the wakening sun,
With gold and with green and with foam iridescent,
Eternity's symbol, where all are at one.

A BALLADE OF GREETING

(Written after a meeting of the Omar Khayyam Club of America at Worcester, Nov. 26, 1921. Read before The Chile Club, Dec. 10, 1921.)

(1)

Though Drudgery to his use our being bends
And Gain and Fame vouchsafe no anodyne,
Yet many a cheerful moment makes amends
When we in goodly fellowship combine.
When Ellis smiles and tells you he feels fine,
Grinnell and Crandon turn their hearts to play,
And Chamberlin the Transcript doth resign,
There's naught can take those memories away.

(2)

The rosy-crowned hour enchantment lends
To Omar and his gospel of the vine.
Dole, with jovial pun, his genius blends,
And Eben's orient soul with joy doth shine;

And Lanman, as from rich Golconda's mine
Brings nuggets of old wisdom, grave and gay;
By happy chance, I met you, comrades mine,
And naught can take your memories away.

(3)

The proverb says, " Old books, old wine, old friends."
But sometimes empty seems the printed line.
Bereavement for us all, some day portends.
Years take our Youth and Congress takes our wine.
But though ten thousand ills our spirits pine,
And drain our lives of promise, day by day,
We'll meet Fate's challenge with this countersign:
" You cannot take our memories away."

Envoi

Burrage, our bounteous prince, whose kindly shrine
We visit, pilgrims on a holiday,
While lives the soul that makes men half divine,
Time cannot take your memory away.

THE TOPER AND THE BUMBLEBEE

When I was a boy, a sweet little boy,
To loiter in June, was all of my joy;
And my dear old grandmother said to me:
" Try to become like the busy bee."

Dear old granny, she had her say;
Long ago, she's laid away;
But her kind advice, I follow it still
When of jolly good liquor I drink my fill.

Oh, the bee flits over the trumpet vine,
And he sucks the slender columbine.
Seedum and bergamot, each for a sup,
Buzz, buzz, buzz, how he liquors up!

THE TOPER AND THE BUMBLEBEE

He scrambles over the larkspur's blue;
The opiate poppy's vermillion hue
Tempts him. With honey he fills his bag.
Buzz, go his wings with a slight zig-zag.

He thrusts his head in the nectarous well
Of the foxglove's golden and crimson bell;
He's coated all over with pollen fuzz;
And he flies in a circle, buzz, buzz, buzz!

Boom, boom, boom! no more he knows
Morning glory from jacqueminots!
Whoop! let's follow the humblebee
And we'll all get drunk as drunk can be!

CIMEX LECTUARIUS

O bitter bituminous bed bug
  That gatherest thy legions by night,
Thou art marked from thy tail to thy head, bug,
  For a pungent, piquant parasite!
Oval body, with flesh opalescent,
  Thin legs, scudding quick through the gloom,
Imperious, insidious, incessant,
  O bitter bitume!

O subtle and swift concentration
  Of thy pallid and poisonous fang,
Doth o'erwhelm with the dread realization
  Of an itch and a sting and a pang,
That createth as many sore places,
  And causeth as many alarms,
As the Lernian hydra hath faces,
  As Briaræus hath arms!

CIMEX LECTUARIUS

O thy victims, the numerous and various,
  Impinged by the light of the moon!
What care if bizarre of precarious,
  Italian or Syrian or Coon?
For thou smitest the tribes and the nations
  With thy spear, and thy senses have room
For a million obscure penetrations,
  O bitter bitume!

Who are we that rate thee repulsive,
  And debar thee from story and song,
And with loud exclamations, revulsive,
  Or by silences do thee a wrong?
Lo, we match not thy fullness of passion
  Nor thy goodly and gladsome delight;
But abuse thee in scurrilous fashion —
  Because we can't bite!

THE MASTER KNOT

Let us raise thee a penitent pæan,
  The heft of thy hand let us own,
Who for somnolence, lazy, lethean,
  Makest man, maid and matron atone,
Strong warlord and slayer of slumber
  Who consumest the couch with thy doom,
When thou gatherest thy thanes without number,
  O bitter bitume!

THE DEAD CANARY

Sweet voiced Dickey, is thy song
  Mute forevermore?
Nay, poor soul, we do thee wrong.
  Thou art gone before!

Is there any brighter hope,
  When our dearest fade;
And our grieving spirits grope
  To meet beyond the shade?

Loud the generations cry,
  In bereavement's pain
" Lord, our dear ones shall not die;
  But be born again! "

THE MASTER KNOT

Is the wingless, silent death
  Evermore for thee;
And for us alone, the breath
  Of immortality?

If each nobler earth-born love
  Over Death taken wing,
Shall not we in some bright grove
  Listen whilst thou sing?

Shalt not thou in thy sweet way
  Chirrup down the dell?
Trill glad welcome, on the day
  When there's no farewell?

If for me Life's aftermath
  Happier life may be,
All along the silent path
  I shall look for thee.

THE DEAD CANARY

And I hope when, passed from Earth,
  Over some green hill,
Far remote from death and birth
  To hear thine answering trill.

LOVE LYRICS

INTRANSIENT

Feathers in air and foam on wave,
  Blown by the West wind, here and there;
Sweet, we are both, from cradle to grave,
  Foam on wave and feathers in air.

Sure as I gaze in your upturned face,
  Seize your hand in the breezes bare;
Sweet, upon Earth, we leave no trace,
  Foam on wave and feathers in air.

Sure as the lark sings loud in the lift,
  And wave these daffodils, fragrant fair;
Swift we go as the white clouds drift,
  Foam on wave and feathers in air.

Then let us cling with lips to lips,
  While our heart's blood pulses there;
Even as the dew, the daystar sips;
  Foam on wave and feathers in air!

Kiss, but whisper; "Love shall abide,
  Love eternal, here as there,
Sweet, for us both, whatever betide
  Foam on wave and feathers in air."

Love we have sought, and Heaven we find
  Here upon Earth, immortal fair.
All the rest goes down the wind,
  Foam on wave and feathers in air.

YOUTH

(*From the Italian*)

How lovely is Youth, but oh,
  How fast it flies away!
Come, let's be happy today
  Tomorrow may no man know.

SONG

SONG

Sweet, have you heard
  Laughter of Spring?
Swift as a bird
  Love's on the wing.
Love was born
  On a day like this,
Flushed with the morn.
  Sweet, let us kiss.

Oh, but the rose
  Fades from the sky;
Daylight goes;
  Shall Love not die?
Why do we hope
  On Death's dark way,
Haply to grope
  To eternal day!

THE MASTER KNOT

Sweet, let us kiss
  In the blooming weather.
Let us not miss
  One joy together.
Flesh is but grass;
  We by Death's portal
Haply may pass;
  Love is immortal.

SHALLOWS

Oh! call them not faithless! they met but to part.
Each word, as it burned was a throb of the heart.
Love bloomed in a moment and died in a day,
Like a rose mid the heather, fast fading away.

Love, come to the breast of the righteous and strong!
To these, their frail bosoms, ye did them a wrong.
All ended, all over! their passion was play.
But a glory was gone, when their love died away.

THE MAID OF THE ISLE

You'll find me, coming or going,
  Whatever else you do.
When tides are ebbing or flowing,
  I'll swim and dive with you.
Over the golden beaches
  We'll wander where we will
Beside the cool green reaches,
  When summer winds grow still.

We'll breast the moorland bushes
  Where many a wild rose fades;
Or where mid whispering rushes
  The great blue heron wades;
Or mid the pale mock heather
  Where owls at noonday soar,
We'll gather our fruit together,
  Wild berries from the moor.

We with the seagulls' roaming
  Press closer each to each,
Where thunderous waves are foaming
  Along the moaning beach:
When storm winds, loud in motion,
  With clouds the heavens o'erwhelm,
I'd sail the raging ocean,
  If you were at the helm.

Though thunder-clap affright me,
  With you I'd still rejoice;
And no sweet sounds delight me
  As the music of your voice;
You'll find me still beside you
  Wherever you may be,
Whatever may betide you,
  What would you more of me?

NOCTURNE

Sweetly sleep, my lady fair!
Evening breezes kiss thy hair;
Broods above thee, Hesper's gleam.
Sleep till dawn, and dream thy dream.

Sleep, my lady! Dreams are bright;
Though lost children of sad Night
Round about thee, wake and weep,
Softly, sweetly, sleep thy sleep.

Soundly sleep, my lady dear!
Soon the dawn will now come near,
Wakening grief in many a breast.
Wake not thou, for sleep is best.

Love forsworn, thou shalt not rue,
In thy dreams that come not true;
Grief must wait till Morning's beam;
Sweetly sleep, and dream thy dream.

PARTING IN THE SPRINGTIME

You've gone when wakening Spring has left our shore;
And I am left with loneliness once more.
So budded hopes, chilled by the winter's breath,
Sink back once more into a trance of Death.

The sodden lawn lies yellow, tinged with gray,
Pale patches where the snowdrifts wear away;
And nowhere yet above that grassy bed,
The crocus or the snowdrop rears his head.

Chill breezes sob, forsaken of the spring
Amid black, leafless boughs, where no birds sing;
Yet happy every breeze and bird must be,
That never yet hath mourned the loss of thee.

Happy the crocus, sleeping 'neath the snow;
They were not born to see that you must go;
Yea, happy all that neither know nor feel
The pangs that your departure must reveal.

NEXT SUMMER

'Tis moonlight in the garden, where the peonies
burst in bloom,
And the lily of the valley fills the borders
with perfume.
Over the shimmering coppice, the red rose
and the white
Peep forth in budding passion for my lady's
pure delight.

But the glory of the garden is dimmed,
from other springs,
Vainly the violets woo the ferns when Love has furled
his wings.
Though the red rose and the white rose breathe their souls
upon the air,
In vain their fragrant beauty; — for my lady
is not there.

Now for the warbling oriole, the lily waits
in vain;
The whippoorwill from yonder grove wails like a soul
in pain;
And all this vernal loveliness is empty
of delight,
With you a thousand miles away, — and I alone
with Night.

I listen for your laughter on the tremor
of the breeze,
And the thrill of your sweet whisper 'mid the quivering
aspen trees;
But the golden days are passed, my love, they will not
come again;
And memories of thwarted hopes must burn our souls
in vain.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF CARDUCCI'S

I shall ne'er possess thee darling, never see thee
any more,
Though the red rose and the white rose bloom as bravely
as before;
Tho' the dew gleams on their petals, while the moon shines
in the sky,
But, I bereft of thee, beloved, — 'twere better
thus to die.

VARIATIONS ON
A THEME OF CARDUCCI'S

O piccola Maria,
Di versi a te che importa?
Esce la poesia
O piccola Maria,
Quando malincolia
Batte del cor la porta.
O piccola Maria,
Di versi a te che importa?

Andante con moto

(*He:*)

O lady fair,
  What is verse to thee?
In sorrow and care,
O lady fair,
The heart grows ware
  Of Poesie,
O lady fair,
  What is verse to thee?

Allegretto

(*She:*)

Ere Sorrow's begun
  Take time to be gay!
Ere Beauty is done
And Sorrow begun,
Let's dance in the sun
  And laugh while we may!
Ere Sorrow's begun,
  'Tis time to be gay!

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF CARDUCCI'S

Con grazia

(*He:*)

My fair, my sweet!
  We love while we may!
We meet and greet,
My fair, my sweet!
Come, let's repeat
  Love's rondelay!
My fair, my sweet,
  We love while we may!

Allegro con cuore

(*She:*)

O fair and sweet
  Forever and aye!
How brave hearts beat,
O fair and sweet,
To meet and greet
  In Love's sweet way!
O fair and sweet
  Forever and aye!

Un poco piu lento

(*He:*)

Our Love was sweet,
  Ere Youth passed o'er.
We may not meet
With Love so sweet.
The Gods we entreat
  In vain to restore
Our Love so sweet,
  Ere Youth passed o'er.

Agitato

(*She:*)

Oh, Love is done
  Forever for me!
O would I had won
Ere Love were done
Beyond the sun
  And below the sea!
Ah, Love is done
  Forever for me!

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF CARDUCCI'S

Adagio maestoso

(*He:*)

When Love is done,
  Comes Poetry for thee.
When the years have run
And Love is done
And the soul hath won
  Sad reality;
When Love is done,
  Comes Poetry for thee.

Solenne

(*He and She:*)

Comes Poetry at last
  When Love is bewailed.
On the wintry blast
Comes Poetry at last;
When Hope is passed
  And the skies are veiled.
Comes Poetry at last
  When Life has failed.

THE GREAT DISTURBER

THE GREAT DISTURBER

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel!"

1 Kings, xviii, 17.

(*At a street corner in Jerusalem, an angry crowd is gathered. In the distance, rise the walls of the temple precinct. At the Beautiful Gate, stands a figure in white raiment. The sunlight, flashing on his hair and beard, seems to transfigure his features, as with a divine radiance. The tallith, striped with blue, is flung back over his shoulders. His left hand holds a scourge of small cords. His right is raised to bless a swarm of beggars that surround him.*)

Ahad: He lashed the flesh about my neck.
Saul: See here,
The bloody welt He raised across this ear!
Tobit: He rasped me on the shoulder blade! behold!
Jonas: He lost me two good pounds of Roman gold!
You talk about your cuts and bruises! Zounds!
I tell you, He hath lost me two gold pounds!
Simon: What's all this noise? I have but new come here.
Ahab: Disturbance and disgrace are both come near
Good merchants of repute, who have our place

In the Lord God, His temple. By His grace,
Our forebears here changed coin fair and well,
Since Ezra's day, and good Zerubbabel.
Custom hath given us money changers, right
Within the Gentiles' Court, both day and night
To earn our livelihood. But on this morn,
A madman . . .

Jonas: Curse the day that He was born!
Ahab: Came with a scourge and drove us from the gate.
Behold Him, as one clothed in regal state,
Before the portal, keeping watch and ward!
Tobit: He should be jailed! Why call ye not the guard!
Saul: Aye, call the Roman soldier! Noble thought!
They're always everywhere, but where they ought
To be!
Tobit: My masters, sure I never saw
One man so set at naught our City's law.
Saul: No laws nor decencies mean aught to Him.
He called us robbers! us!
Tobit: My sight grew dim
When first I fain would look Him eye for eye.
Such glance must madness mean!

Saul: He gave the lie
To us, established merchants of repute!
Jonas: He must Himself be a dishonest brute.
Such often will be born, half fool, half knave;
And the loud praise of men is all they crave.
They, in the market place, their passion vent
Gainst gainful trade and stable government;
And ever will a crowd come in their way;
Who could not earn one mite in half a day!
Ahab: That madman says all sorts of scurrile things;
Prefers a lily to the robe of kings;
Tells of a lazar at a rich man's gate,
Who, for the broken meat, must daily wait;
And calls him, when the mongrels lick his hide,
A better man than he who dwells inside!
Jonas: I bear no anger for His frenzied word
When he proclaims Him chosen of the Lord.
His, " Blessed be the meek," and this and that,
Are all not worth the mewling of a cat.
I let Him call Himself the " Son of Man."
But, when He tells the people of His plan
Of brotherhood on Earth . . . such lies as these . . .
Or slanders holy scribes and Pharisees;

All such indecent words, as each man knows,
End as today, in violence and blows.
He doth disturb King Herod's government;
Inflames men's minds, and preaches discontent;
Runs like a madman in the temple ground;
Tears down my booth, and loses me two pound.

Ahab: Sweet friends, there's one safe place where he should go;
And that is, Golgotha!

Saul: Aye, well we know
The road for Him.

Ahab: He doth the crowd abuse;
The needy call Him now, King of the Jews.

Tobit: Aye, there's sedition, rank sedition there!

Jonas: I fain would hale Him up by His bright hair
To Calvary!

Ahab: Your strength would be your loss.
The law doth make Him carry His own cross!

Jonas: I fain would see Him nailed!

Ahab: The time draws near.
He'll tread that road, from rumors that I hear.

Saul: I'd see the undressed leather tan His hide.

Ahab: 'Twere best of all to see Him crucified!

Jonas: Oh, the brave sight! oh, oh, 'twould do me good,
To see Him writhe upon His cross of wood!
There let Him rave 'gainst trade and government!
There let Him curse the strong and competent
There let Him pity harlot and oppressed,
What time men thrust the spear point 'gainst His breast!
Let see if He can staunch the flowing blood,
With crazy doctrine of Man's brotherhood!

Ahab: No more, no more! Beware what words you say!
Nor let blind passion carry you away!
We've information lodged, I tell you sure,
Against this braggart, who the world would cure;
And make the poor man rich, and make the rich man poor!

Simon: Why, if such flag of doctrine were unfurled,
The sun would nevermore move round the world!

MIRACLES

" By miracles, the hand of God we see."
So spake the priest, " No other way could be,
When Christ, the Son of God came down on Earth,
To show the folk paternal Deity."

Ah, dost thou then believe that He would deign,
Like all the old, false gods of every strain,
Dear to the heart of pagan worshippers,
With such poor tricks, His mysteries to profane!

Would the Creator of the moving air
And Love and Death, mysterious everywhere,
Seek to attest His Deity on Earth,
Like some poor peddler at a country fair!

MIRACLES

Look at the sprouting grass in yon green dell,
Each blade of living fibres, woven well,
Itself a greater miracle by far
Than all these fairy tales the Scriptures tell.

Men say that once the image maker's trade
Boys aped at play; and Christ among them played;
And there the very hand of very God
From that moist clay, the living sparrows made.

Gaze on the lonely eagle, yesterday
A mottled egg; but now he wings free way
Where west wind bloweth o'er wild mountain tops,
A nobler bird, create from subtler clay.

Is not the storm-cloud, sweeping on swift wing
O'er thirsty fields, a far more wondrous thing
Than herded devils, made to drive poor swine
Into the Ocean's depths, there perishing?

Gaze on the windy wheatfield, waving free;
Or gleaming porpoise, leaping from the sea;
More worth your wonder, than the old world tale
Of loaves and fishes, made in Galilee.

Gaze on the fragrant petals, curling wide,
Of damask rose, dark purple in her pride;
Or feathery ferns, outbranching on still air;
And put your tinsel miracles one side.

Gaze on the evening star in changeful sky,
When, crimson in the west, the sunsets die,
Leaving gold memories of God's afterglow;
And let your foolish miracles go by.

ECHOES FROM THE NORSE

Finnask Aesir a Ithavelli
ok un moldthinur mótkan doma
ok minnask thar á megindóma
ok á Fimbultys fornar rúnar

—Voluspó

The Aesir meet within the Vale of Ida;
And of the great earth snake, they talk together;
And they remember them of mighty portents;
And of the former runes of Fimbultyr.

VALHALLA

O'er skerry cliffs illumed with splendour,
Sunset of crimson beyond dark clouds;
Where tower afar from fear of evil
The halls and bowers of sun bright burgs;

Far in the West behold Valhalla!
Moot hall of Odin, hallowed of old;
Cloud built walls and cloud capped towers;
That blaze above like burnished gold.

Far in the West behold Valhalla!
Vast hall of Odin, roofed over with shields.
Steel blue byrnies strew the broad benches
Beyond the door posts of pure wrought gold.

And these be graven with godlike glories,
Brave deeds of Odin done in better days;
How once he hung heavy on the ash tree,
Of Death and Life, old runes to learn;

How once he fared to Hell far forth
To learn the doom of Baldor's dreams;
How once beyond Asgard he bore
Counsel to men in Midgard's meads.

Taught men to wield weapons in war;
Taught them to ride on the sea gulls' road;
Taught them to mingle music and mirth
By the hall fires at eve when the mead flows free;
And boy and bright girl, blue eyes and gray
Give love for love by the leaping flame.

Or some old scald by the high seat there,
Singeth a song so sweet and sad;
Sweet in the sad, sad in the sweet,
Strange how sweet the sadness of song!

VALHALLA

Odin the war god on the North Wind rides,
Lord of the battle and the lives of kings!
But Odin the scald, the sorrow of his song,
Endures forever beyond the gods' doom.

So the gold door with runes engraved,
Opens on the hall of Odin's fame.
There at sundown sword and shield,
Each guest lays on the benches low.

Mingle, Valkyries, the evening's mead;
Hand drink in horns to the warrior host!
Wassail! wassail! to the wise all father!
Mingle the mead till the merry morn
Shoots bright beams through the curtains of blue
Athwart the gold posts that prop the great door!

BIFROST

Bifrost bridge the bright gods bears
From Asgard's mount to Midgard's mead.
Oft gray Sleipnir gallops across,
Famed horse of Odin to the fight afar.

Who sits the saddle, stern and stately,
One blazing eye under broad brow!
Round his gold helm ravens twain
Circle and circle and never cease flying;
Hugin and Munin, Memory and Thought,
Wizards of Odin on the west wind blown
Point the path to the battle's pale.

BIFROST

From that wild heath with stakes of hazel
Ringed all round comes the battle's roar.
From Heaven's blue vault swoop the Valkyrie
Where blood stained warriors give wound for wound.

Soon shall Bifrost bear a girl rider,
Black steed laden with steel clad limbs;
A warrior's corse from battle chosen,
Who fought his last fight on fenced field.

Fenced with hazel, fresh from the forest!
Tender hazel, what tales could ye tell!
Once ye listened to the lark, his longing,
Warbling wild in the wild wood free!

Now ye must hearken to the hurtle of the battle;
List to the song of sword on shield;
Crash of the axe gainst shield and spearshaft;
Hark to the hiss of the serpent of the helm;

Arrow of ashwood edged with goose wing,
Bearer of bale to the great earle's brain!

Bifrost bridge bears from the battle
Many a maid on steed of murky black;
There rides one with raven black hair
Streaming on the wind, where the ravens scream!

Bifrost bridge quakes beneath the burden.
A king she bears across her saddle bow!
Horned helm is hewn asunder;
Ruddy with gore his beard of gray!

Hero of combats, more than hundred,
All of his deeds on Earth are done!
Fair and foul for him are all over;
Gathered at last the fruit of his years!
Now on Bifrost, the rainbow bridge,
Black haired Hild hales him along.

BIFROST

Then comes quick with clattering hoofs,
White horse of Hrist with the ruddy hair;
Fast on her shoulder a fair young face
Lies like an infant asleep, who smiles.

Bright hair of gold, blowing from the brow,
Last night kissed by the lips of love!
Calmly he smiles, pale of cheek and brow;
Blood drips black from the broken byrnie.

Young and old alike must go
On Bifrost bridge when the battle game is played.
Old and young, Odin welcomes both
Who fought the good fight on Life's fair field.

THE NORNS

Where dwell the Norns, weird sisters three?
Where do they weave the web of human fate?
Warp and woof of weal and woe
For all men's lives in the light of the sun?

O'er clouds of gray mist on a mount they dwell
Steep and sheer by the sounding sea;
In a far, dim hall where no guest fares,
Raftered and roofed round Yggdrasill,
Round the broad base of tree trunk bare,
They weave and they weave the web of human fate;
They weave and they weave the warp and woof
By the faint half light of a flickering fire.

These be the Norns whose names men know;
But no man knows beyond their names.
Urda the eldest utterly of all,
White was her hair before the nine worlds.

THE NORNS

She cards the wool wherewith they weave
Frail colors of hope like rainbow flame;
Frail flowers of hope that fade on the day;
Endless night is the end of them all.

The second sister is more stern than she,
Verdandi the weaver of woe and of weal
Weaving the web of all men's weird
Brief lives of woe, brief hours of weal,
Interwoven for the whole wide world;
She thrids men's lives on the throbbing loom;
Her power is vast; but her face is veiled.

Forth steps Skuld, fairest and youngest;
Pity never gleamed in the strange eyes of gray.
Deep eyes of gray where the future dwells,
Pity for men's grief was never in your gaze.

She rips the woven web and rends it away;
Tattered and torn she throws it on the wind;
Well she wots the woes of mortal man;
And her crimson lips are curled with a smile.

Thus work the Norns when the web they weave
For the fate of the world and of human weird.
Well they wot each wild desire
Budded in the heart of beings unborn.

Darkness to men who dwell mid the dreams
Of Life, is to them as the light of the sun;
Death and Life on their loom they weave;
And the shuttles of their loom are Time and Change.

ODIN'S EVENSONG

Midmost of Asgard from the cloud built mount
Bridged o'er to Earth by rainbow beams,
Where the wild swan wings her way to the west,
Looms Valhalla o'er the vast of Ocean;
O'er Oegir's foam flaming afar;
Five hundred gates of pure wrought gold.

From dawn to dusk those lofty doors
Must all be shut save one alone;
The western gate by giants made;
Bargained by Loki from the Brinsigar;
Open all day from dawn to dark
With never a bolt and never a bar;
For the one eyed Odin ever wide open;
For the wily wanderer wide open alway.

There in the long late afternoon,
The king of nine worlds comes home to his hall;
Geri and Freki, gray wolves twain,
Frantic upleap for god's fair welcome;
Fawn at his feet as inward he fares
To the bench of honor, hardby the north wall.

He hangs thereover his mantle of blue;
Gurgin the spear he sets beside him.
When first that spear he shook in his hand,
Midgard trembled to the midst of the sea;
Whirlwinds swept over shuddering skies
The storm of red war swept over the world.
Now the old spear, slayer of men,
Stands at rest by the seat poles there.

Silently bides the white bearded god,
With cheek on hand and eyelid half closed.
Hilda steals o'er fir strown floor;
No footfall echoes to Odin's ear.

ODIN'S EVENSONG

She bears aloft a harp of beaten gold,
By ten of Earth's heroes hardly upborne.
She bears the gold harp to the battle god's knee,
For solace and rest from cares that recur.

Two ravens bide on his shoulder blade,
Hugin and Munin, Memory and Thought;
In his listening ear they whisper low,
Sweet music made from thought and memory.

Memories of joy, memories of grief,
Tinged by time to melody are turned;
And memories that all men mourn the most
Sound sweetest of all on the harp strings of Odin.

Lightly his fingers linger on the strings,
Liquid melody, soft and low,
Silvery lilt that lightly steals,
Faint like an echo heard from afar;

Hovers around the hearth fire there,
As hovers the lark in the light of the morn;
Hovers aloft to the rafters above;
Fills Valhalla with a song half heard.

The father of gods gazes afar
Beyond Valhalla, the shield hung walls;
Hearkens afar to the hest of his dreams,
Deeds of heroes in his own heart heard.

Swiftly his fingers sweep the strings;
The raftered roof rings loud again;
Bright spears that pierce from beam to beam
With great glad memories throb once more.

Through all the wide hall wild music wells;
Music a soldier's heart that stirs;
Crash of the edges, clangor of the horns,
Cries of victory at evening won.

ODIN'S EVENSONG

Cries of the vanquished slain in the van,
Souls never daunted by dole and despair;
Souls unconquered by the strokes of Fate;
Heart's blood they give who die like heroes.
Down the dark gulf of dire defeat,
They follow the glory; they follow the gleam.

"Hearts of heroes chosen of Hild,
Welcome warriors, weary at eve!
Welcome, welcome, warrior dead!
Welcome once more to Valhalla and Odin!
Loyal hearts, true to the last,
Welcome once more to the father of all!"

Then without Valhalla's walls
Falls the tread of unnumbered feet,
Measured tramp of troop on troop,
As the host of Odin at eve comes home.

Five hundred gates on hinges swing,
As the troops of the dead throng the vast hall;
Over the host, harpstrings of Odin
Throughout Valhalla vibrate again;
While long and loud from warriors' throats
Comes the glad shout of answering song.

"Honor to Odin, father of heroes!
Honor to all hearts that are bold!
Helmet bearer hail we thy glory!
Heart's desire beyond Death's doom!
Lord of victory, Lord of the ages,
Lord of valor in the lives of men!
Hail to the gleam of thy godlike glory!
Hail once more to the father of all!"

YGGDRASILL

O'er mountains grim and gaping vales
Where Bifrost bridge spans the broad skies;
Gainst wind blown skies stormy with scud,
Looms the great ash of Yggdrasill.

Three gnarled roots from the trunk outcurl
O'er mount and mead for miles on miles;
To the fields of frost one fares afar,
The glacial realm where giants dwell.

Netherward far to Nifelheim
One root goes down where dwell the dead
And one doth mingle with Midgard's meads,
Far and wide in the world of men;
O'er Midgard's meads where men must mourn
Or make mad mirth till the final morn.

THE MASTER KNOT

Soars a lone eagle o'er that strange tree;
At the gnarled roots Nidhug gnaws;
Watered be the roots by Wisdom's well;
Mirmir's well where no man drinketh
Save one more wise than this world's men.

And he drank not as one who drinketh
Fair and free at the feast of a friend;
He paid the price for Wisdom's power
Quick from his head one quivering eye
Mirmir plucked for the price he paid.

Then for nine days and nine drear nights
Odin must hang heavy on the tree;
By sharp spear pierced, blood sacrifice,
Himself to himself must Odin hang
To learn the runes that rule the nine worlds.

Pain for power; for wisdom pain!
Man's soul grows great with grievous wounds.
Ninefold power and ninefold pain
For him who would drink of the deep well of Urd.

THE LAY OF THE TWO SWORDS

Two swords hung in Nidoyce wine hall;
One, the king's own, o'erwrought with niello;
One in latter Yule left by a stranger
Who came as he went by secret ways.

Now, when warriors slept in winehall,
Fires died down for the feast was over;
Two great blades gleamed in the darkness;
And either told to the other, his tale.

(*Tyrfing quoth:*)

I am Tyrfing; I am the mighty
Steel wrought sword made sharp for Odin;
Given by Odin unto Angantyr;
Me, that great one gave to his grandsons.

Forged by dwarfs in Finmark's mountains,
Carried by kings who called me holy,
Me, men worshipped wonderful weapon;
I was a flame in the temple of Odin.

(*Legbit quoth:*)

I am Legbit, years long ago,
Shaped in sand by the sons of Buri;
Walrus tooth, my gold-tipped handle;
Blade of old bronze ere Odin was born.

All along my blade are blood red letters;
World old runes on white enamel;
White be the breast of him who bears me;
Ruddy with blood, the breast of the foeman!

(*Tyrfing quoth:*)

Many a man I marked for Odin;
Hot blood stained the god's high altar;
Gore blood dropped in golden basin;
Cold at throat of captive groaning.

THE LAY OF THE TWO SWORDS

(*Legbit quoth:*)

Now the old gods are all gone over;
Lords of victory lords of the dying!
Now another faith rules the nations;
Lord of Mercy, Man's Redeemer.

(*Tyrfing quoth:*)

Now I serve the new God's nature
Christ on cross, who conquered Odin;
Blessed in His name at Bergen's altar;
In cathedral consecrated.

(*Legbit quoth:*)

When Valhalla was void forever
Odin and I together alone
Fared afar to Finmark's mountains,
There to dwell till the final doom.

Weary was Odin of wiles and warfare;
Weary of passion and the pain of yearning;
Toil of Man and tears of Woman;
Weary, weary of the woes of the world.

Long he bided, lonely brooded;
Viewed the Northland's vast aurora;
Viewed the Southland's swart pine forest
Silvered o'er with shimmering snow.

Then Odin's heart throbbed in his bosom;
Back came passion and the pain of yearning;
Strains of passion that swelled like music
Deeper and sweeter and sacred forever.

Now he knows the new God's nature;
Power to heal the heart of the nations;
Love that moves in Midgard's mazes;
Turning dead dross to truth divine.

(*Tyrfing quoth:*)

I am Tyrfing; I am the mighty
Sword of the church and state of Norway;
All good men follow me for glory,
Norway's king and the Church of Rome!

(*Legbit quoth:*)

I have lived on lofty mountain;
I have heard winds under heaven;
Rivers I have heard rushing in the Springtime;
I have seen the silent stars!

I have learned on lonely mountain,
Lore beyond the bourne of Norway;
Truth beyond old Rome, her teaching;
Love beyond Life's tragic lore.

(*Tyrfing quoth:*)

Now I strike for the cause of Norway,
Sacred now, sacred forever!
Ho, for kingcraft! ho, for churchcraft!
Ho, for the cause of church and crown!

(*Legbit quoth:*)

I will fight for truth and freedom;
Humbler folk shall find me helper;
Older than worlds of Man's endeavor,
I will guard God's garth of Love.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ICELANDIC

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

Helgi took Sigrun to wife and they had a son. But Helgi never grew old. Dag, the son of Hogni, prayed Odin to avenge his father. Odin lent Dag his spear. Dag found Helgi, his sister's husband, as you might say, near Fetterland. He waylayed Hogni with the spear. There fell Helgi, but Dag rode to Sevafell and told the tidings to Sigrun.

Loath am I sister sorrow to tell thee
Grief without will, beloved, I gave thee.
Fell this morning, Fetterland under,
Best in the world, thy king, my brother.

(*Sigrun quoth:*)

So may all oaths bite thine entrails,
First thou swearest, false to Helgi;
Hard by the limpid Water of Lightning,
Or the o'er-swollen stone of the Waves!

Slippery be the ship beneath thee sailing
When fair breezes blow before thee!
Stumble, the mare, beneath thee speeding
When fierce foemen follow eager!
Broken be the sword, the which thou brandish,
Or let it bite thy bosom alone!

Well were thy doom for death of Helgi,
If thou wert a wolf, lorn in the woodland!
Empty of comfort, empty of joyance,
Thou shouldst crunch dead corpses' bones!

(*Dag quoth:*)

O sister mine, mad is thine error,
When thou wouldst bring bale on thy brother!
Odin alone began all evil,
When, among brothers, strife runes he bore!

Rings I bear thee, red gold bracelet;
Victory Vale and Vandal Valley;
Half of my home for thy harm's ransom,
Splendid lady, for thee and thy sons!

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Sigrun quoth:*)

Sorrowful I sit by Fells of Seva;
Love not life at light of morning!
Darling of the folk, at Dawn's red wakening,
Nevermore thy steed for thee shall neigh.

So had his foes the fear of Helgi;
And the kinsmen of all his foemen,
E'en before the wolf as, wild with terror,
Goats at the fells fly fleet in fear.

So branched Helgi o'er brave warriors,
Like a stately ash the thorn bush over;
Or as the deer calf, dew besprinkled,
All other wildings riseth above.

(*Sigrun's bondmaid walked at evening by Helgi's barrow; and saw Helgi ride thereby with many men. The bondmaid said:*)

What false seeming, here for my seeing?
Ere the gods' deem be dead men riding?
Be these stallions pricked by spur points?
Have these heroes found the way home?

(*Helgi quoth:*)

Here thou seest no false seeming,
Though thou dost look on doomed men's riding.
Though our steeds be pricked by spur points,
Yet my heroes fare not homeward.

(*Home went the bondmaid and said to Sigrun:*)

Out go, Sigrun, from Fells to Seva;
If thou list to find thy loved one.
Bloody wounds drip; now at his bidding,
Thou shalt stay the sore drop falling.

(*Sigrun went to Helgi's barrow and said:*)

I am so fain to find my fair one;
Even as the hungry hawks of Odin
Know when the dead lie warm to devour;
While the dew drops gleam in the dawn!

Long I kiss thee, lifeless Lover!
Now I cast off thy bloody corselet!
Helgi, thy hair is wet with hoar frost!
Oh, thou art drowned in dead men's dew!

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Helgi quoth:*)

Sigrun, alone, from Fells of Seva,
Thou with harm dew smitest Helgi.
Greatest, golden girl, with grisly tear drops,
Each a drop of blood on the breast of thy lord!

Let's drink deeply draughts of gladness,
Thou we have lost the land of the living!
None may sing the songs of sorrow,
Though our bosoms burst with bleeding.
Now our dear ones dwell in the barrow;
Daughters of kings, with us dead men!

(*Sigrun made her bed in the barrow:*)

Here's the couch I raise for Helgi;
King of my heart, kin of the Ylfings!
I would slumber soft on thy bosom,
Same as I loved thee in life before!

(*Helgi quoth:*)

Now I'd say is naught unheard of,
Soon or late at Fells of Seva.
Light of my darkness, Hogni's daughter,
I in my grave and thou in my arms!

Time is for riding; sky roads redden;
Loose the fallow mare to tread the fowls' way!
Westward I, for Windhelm's dwelling,
Ere World Father's warriors waken.

(*Helgi and his men rode on their way; and Sigrun went home once more. On another evening, Sigrun sent the bondmaid to keep watch by the barrow. At sunrise, Sigrun came to the barrow and said:*)

Come were he now, if come, he listed,
Sigmund's bairn, from bowers of Odin.
Vainly I wait for hopes that are vanished.
Low on the ash tree sit the old eagles;
And all folk drift to the meeting of dreams.

(*Quoth the bondmaid:*)

Hardy art thou alone to hasten,
Here born, to dead men's houses.
Host of the dead, their power to harm thee,
Waxeth at midnight; waneth at morn.

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

HERVOR'S LAY

Here at sundown met with a herdsman,
Near Munarvagi the warrior maiden.

(*Herdsman quoth:*)

Who thus alone comes to our island?
Haste thee now to find night harborage.

(*Hervor quoth:*)

I cannot go to find night greeting.
Friend have I none on this bare island.
Tell me, hind, ere hence thou hasten,
Where be the barrow and bones of Hiorvard?

(*Herdsman quoth:*)

Ask not of that! Speak not at all!
Vain thou farest friend of the Vikings!
Scurry as fast as feet may speed us!
All out of doors grows awesome for men!

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Take for thy fee, this fair gold bracelet.
Free born maiden, fear cannot stay me!

(*Herdsman quoth:*)

Never yet gold that man may give me,
Shines fair enough to stay my running!
Fool I hold thee, faring thither,
Anyone alone in the murk so grimly!
Bale fires flit! the barrow gapes wide!
Burns field and fen! faster let us run!

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Carest thou for the crackle of a fire?
Let this island burn like an ember;
I will not blench before it blindly;
Now, by my soul, I speak unafraid.

Fast that herdsman fled to the forest,
Far from the voice of that fair maiden;
While in her breast, against bad omens
Swelled the highborn heart of Hervor.

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Wake thou, Angantyr! Hervor wakes thee,
Only daughter of thy dear Tofa.
Bring me from the barrow the brand of brightness,
Forged by the dwarfs for Svarfur-Lami.

Hervard, Hiorvard, Hrani, Angantyr!
I will arouse you, under the pine roots!
Byrnie and helm and brand of brightness;
Shield and steed and ruddy spear shaft!

Are ye become for evil yearning,
Silent dust, ye sons of Angrim?
Is none here of the heirs of Eyfer,
Me to answer at Munarvagi?

Hervard, Hiorvard, Hrani, Angantyr!
Woe to the flesh and ribs within you!
Like black ant hill crawl your barrow,
Yielding not the dwarfs' wrought iron.

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Hervor, my daughter, why dost call ye?
Mad are thy cries and loud with curses!
O daughter mine, mad is thine error,
Stormy of soul to stir death slumber!

Art thou, maiden, more than human,
Visiting graves in the fire lit gleaming;
With graven spear and Gothic metal,
Helm and byrnie, here at the grave?

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Flesh and blood have all men found me,
Ere at your abode I came for asking.
Bring me from the barrow the brand of brightness,
Forged by dwarfs, unfit for dead men.

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Father nor kinsman made my funeral;
Deadly foemen dug my barrow;
Two men were left and they took Tyrfing;
Now, but one becomes his owner.

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Tell me the truth, thou shalt not tarry
Whole in thy barrow, if thou bearest not
Tyrfing with thee. Little art thou eager
To pay thy debt to thine only child!

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Hell us unbarred; the graves gape open!
All is aflame about the island.
All out of doors is death to look on.
Hasten to thy ship whilst yet thou mayst!

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Flare, ye flames, ye cannot fright me!
I am not afeared for marish fires!
Faints not my heart; fears not at all;
The dead stand forth at the doors of their graves!

Men of the barrow, with spells I bind you!
Side by side, lie low, ye spectres!
Dead with your dead in your graves decaying!
Bring me, Angantyr, quick from the barrow,
Breaker of shields and bane of Hialmar.

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Hialmar's fate, wrapped round with fire
Sleeps in the grave beneath my shoulders.
Now in the world I know no maiden
Hardy to hold the harmer of men!

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Dear gleaming brand! oh, if I get it,
Gladly my hand will grasp and hold it!
I am not afeared for dead men's fire!
Sink low, ye flames my sight before!

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Brave thou mayst be but brainsick also,
Thus at bale fire rushing not blindly!
Rather will I bring the sword from the barrow.
I will not deny thee my girl, my darling!

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Fairly done, O king, my father;
Me thou hast brought the sword from the barrow;
Better, my lord, to lift this weapon
Than if I ruled the round of Norway!

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Daughter, ye know not what ye desire.
Woe to thy words, unhappy woman!
Soon will Tyrfing, if thou wilt trust me,
Root from the world our race entire!

Strangely thy boy in after season,
Tyrfing will bear and trust in valiance.
He as Heidrick hailed by the nations,
Tallest of all in the tents of the sun.

(*Hervor quoth:*)

I must hie me to the steeds of Ocean;
Chief, thy daughter of heart is cheerful.
Little do I reck loved son of rulers,
How my sons may deal hereafter.

(*Angantyr quoth:*)

Long mayst thou own the sword to enjoy it;
Hold in scabbard the bane of Hialmar;
Pry not the edge, for both be poisoned;
Dread disease and doom of mankind.

Farewell, daughter, fain would I give thee
Twelve men's might, if thou wilt trust me;
Sons of Angrim, heart and sinew;
All we at last with life laid down.

PART OF THE LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

(*Hervor quoth:*)

Bide in the barrow for I must leave you;
Hail to you all! hence I must hasten!
Oh, but I feared the phantom fire,
When the bale fires flamed about me!

EDDIES FROM THE WHIRLPOOL

CHILD'S PLAY

A poor little child, he happily played
  Where sunbeams smiled on the ocean strand.
With tiny pail and little tin spade,
A poor little, queer little pond he made;
A seaweed blackened pond he made
  Where the ocean meets the land.

All around those waters still
  He raised a wall of sand,
Round those waters, dark and still,
Crumbling towers he raised at will,
While the tern wheeled over him, screaming shrill,
  At the work of his dimpled hand.

What if the waters were sable dyed
  With eel-grass, scooped from sand!

His poor little heart swelled out in pride;
His poor little soul exultant cried:
"What care I for Time or Tide?
Here is the work of my hand!"

Thus our sand built hopes arise
Beside the sounding sea.
Science and art and merchandise,
Crumbling towers beneath gray skies,
What are they all to the truly wise
By the shores of eternity?

Lo, where the sea tides ebb and flow,
We raise our childish, rampired wall;
But the winds of heaven arise and blow
And the tides rush in to lay them low,
Forevermore to lay them low
And the Ocean of Time sweeps over all.

THE CALM

The summer rain steals down from misty skies;
  The summer breezes whisper neath our eaves;
But still the Ocean's bosom placid lies;
  And still above her depths, the sea gull grieves.

And the gray heavens brood o'er our sand girt isle;
  And o'er the moors, where Silence doth not cease;
And one may wander onward many a mile,
  Ere any rumor mars his dream of peace.

O Peace! O happy days! O tranquil hours!
  Shall no fell rumors come to vex our shores?
No noise perplex our ears, save summer showers,
  Or when the storm-wind o'er the ocean roars?

Nay, Peace, thou art delusion. Though thy smile
  May seem to light our lives from Heaven afar,
'Tis but thy semblance lulls us here awhile,
  When all the world cracks in the fires of War.

Then rouse, ye breakers, in your wild alarm;
  And rage, ye stormwinds on the lonely shore!
There's force and strife 'neath Nature's loveliest calm.
  Awake! awake! my soul, and dream no more!

SUNSET

Behold the sun, above the misty sea
  Is whelmed, as in his blood! Black clouds on high
  With brand of lightning cleave the lowering sky,
Save where the western wave glows mournfully.
O Lord of Day and tranquil harvestry
  And fruitful love! Thy dreams of peace must die;
  Over the western world thy beams go by;
And cliff and headland bid goodnight to thee!

Alas, in this vast war must all things fair
Perish at once, where Death reaps everywhere
  His ghastly harvest from ten million graves!
Honor and Faith, Virtue and fair Renown
And Love and Hope, moaning in blood, go down
  And night shuts in, over the storm-tossed waves.

THE PRICE

Not only mourn the brave who died at morn,
  Who struck their blow and perished in their pride,
  But mourn the future lives who also died,
Vain hopes of generations yet unborn.
Nor mourn the stricken children, bayonet torn,
  Shell driven o'er the blazing countryside;
  But mourn Man's twilight and his eventide,
And Brotherhood betrayed, and Faith foresworn.

Yea, chiefly mourn the most heartrending cost.
  Two thousand years' slow progress spent and lost,
  This goodly oak cut down as by a sword.
Brother of Death, Sin's crowned and armed birth,
How long shall this new Anarch reign on earth,
  Unsmitten of Thy thunderbolt, O Lord?

CHAMPAGNE SONG

OR

THE WINE OF VICTORY

(*Read at the annual dinner of the Omar Khayyam Club of America.*)

1.

Still wine hath an intimate fire
That gratefully tickles each vein;
But the springtime of youth and desire
Bubbles up in the wine of champagne.

Chorus:

Bubbles up in the glass of champagne, my boys,
Bubbles up in the sparkling champagne, my boys,
Bubbles high in the golden champagne, my boys,
The sparkling, golden champagne.

2.

With shot and with shell and the terrors of Hell,
The Germans swept over the Aisne,
But the spirit of France broke their onward advance,
And dashed all their hopes in Champagne.

Chorus:

Then here's the poilus of Champagne, my boys,
Who scattered the Boche in Champagne, my boys,
From the Marne to the Aisne in Champagne, my boys,
When red grew the grapes of Champagne.

3.

They gave up their lives for their children and wives,
But they shed not their lifeblood in vain,
For the world they made free over land, over sea,
By the battles they fought in Champagne.

CHAMPAGNE SONG

Chorus:

Then here's the poilus of Champagne, my boys,
Who laid down their lives in Champagne, my boys,
To the living and dead in Champagne, my boys,
Let's drink to them all in champagne.

4.

For the loved ones that mourn, they no more may return,
A tear for each bumper we drain;
But we at the height of this festival night,
Let our hearts be as light as champagne.

Chorus:

Then here's to the merry champagne, my boys,
And here's to the gallant champagne, my boys,
To the glory of France in Champagne, my boys,
The glorious, victorious champagne.

SUPPLICATION IN TIME OF WAR

We who have loitered in the paths of ease
  Waken us now, O Lord, to the world's need.
  Even as men, of Thee who took no heed,
On some fair isle, begirt with slumberous seas,
  Long years we dreamed. For this, our sons must bleed;
Because we loitered in the paths of ease.

Fondly we dreamed of earth's eternal peace
  To our dull ears, the whisperings of war
  Came like some fierce old legend, faint and far,
We dreamed of wealth and comfort to release
  Our souls from Fate and Valour's guiding star
Because we loitered in the paths of ease.

SUPPLICATION IN TIME OF WAR

We dreamed that Time would change and Strife would cease,
  And fair soft words beguile a tyrant's hate.
  Thy thunderbolt awoke us, not too late,
To fight for Freedom and Thy Word. For these
  Our sires have fought and made our nation great,
But we have loitered in the paths of ease.

Kindle our souls, that zeal for Thee increase,
  So that, in words of flame the world may see
  Thy truth and we may win Thy victory.
Oh make us worthier of a nobler peace!
  Whereby our children, brave and wise and free,
No more shall loiter in the paths of ease.

EPITAPH FOR THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS WHO FELL IN FRANCE

(Adapted from Simonides)

They clothed our land once more with freedom and with glory,
  Now wrapped in Death's dark cloud beyond the ocean wave.
Dying, they did not die, Immortal is their story,
  Shining beyond the stars, above each hero's grave.

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